



DISTRICT WORK PERIOD PACKET

FIGHTING BIG MONEY IN POLITICS

MARKING 10 YEARS SINCE *CITIZENS UNITED*

In January 2010, the Supreme Court handed down the *Citizens United* decision, allowing unlimited secret money to pour into our politics and poison our democracy. At the time, court watchers and campaign finance experts ominously warned that the decision would cede even more political power to wealthy donors and well-connected special interests – and undermine American democracy in the process.

Ten years since the infamous *Citizens United* decision, these grave predictions have come to pass. Today, we live in a Wild West of unlimited big money in our politics, which has upended legal precedent and dramatically eroded safeguards against corruption.

What's worse, *Citizens United* has diminished the voice of regular Americans, leaving people feeling left out and locked out of their own democracy. Polling conducted over the last ten years has registered the public's disaffection with big money at record levels.

Our founders envisioned a government of the many, not the money. Since assuming the majority, House Democrats have worked tirelessly to fulfill this vision, passing H.R. 1 to curb dark money in our politics and return power back to the people. We will keep fighting to ensure that our government works for the public interest, not for special interests.

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PREPARED BY



THE
DEMOCRACY REFORM TASK FORCE
REP. JOHN SARBANES, CHAIR

TALKING POINTS

FIGHTING BIG MONEY IN POLITICS

- Ten years have passed since the now-infamous *Citizens United* decision. Today, we live in a Wild West of unlimited big money in our politics – a Wild West where the wealthy and well-connected amass vast amounts of power and influence, while the American people feel locked out and left behind.
- To fight back against the deluge of big money unleashed by *Citizens United*, House Democrats made fixing our democracy the number one priority and passed H.R. 1 in the first 100 days of the new Congress.
- H.R. 1 is a once-in-a-generation reform package that will restore the promise of American democracy and repair our democratic institutions. This comprehensive suite of anti-corruption measures will achieve three key, urgently needed reforms:
 - 1) Ensure clean and fair elections.
 - 2) End the dominance of big money in our politics.
 - 3) Enact tougher standards to fight corruption and ensure that our nation's public officials work for the people.
- Democrats want to build a democracy that actually works for the people, because when we do, government can deliver positive results that make life better for all Americans.
- Democrats have fought to end the special-interest agenda in Washington – an agenda exacerbated by the *Citizens United* decision. We'll keep fighting, day in and day out, to clean up corruption and give the American people a seat at the table.

- When the American people are back in charge, we can drive progress for every family, in every community:
 - We can raise wages and create millions of well-paying jobs.
 - We can lower prescription drug prices and reduce health care costs.
 - We can make bold, job-creating investments in sustainable infrastructure.
 - We can take strong, visionary action against the climate crisis.
 - We can provide a pathway to success with lifetime learning opportunities, on-the-job training initiatives and better access to high-quality education.
 - We can deliver universal high-speed internet to every corner of the country, including rural America.
 - We can crack down on corporate monopolies and protect American consumers from fraud and abuse at the hands of Big Banks and Big Pharma.

KEY PROVISIONS OF H.R. 1

FIGHTING BIG MONEY IN POLITICS

- **Guarantee Disclosure of Money in Politics**
 - H.R. 1 shines a light on dark money by requiring all organizations that spend money in our politics to disclose donors who spend \$10,000+.
 - H.R. 1 updates and upgrades online political ad disclosure.
 - H.R. 1 breaks the “nesting-doll” sham that allows big-money contributors and special interests to hide the true source of their political spending.
- **Empower Citizens to Fight Back Against Big Money**
 - H.R. 1 gives political power to everyday Americans, creating a multiple matching system for small donations – paid for by wealthy tax dodgers and corporate lawbreakers. This new, 21st-century system of citizen-owned elections will break special interests’ stranglehold on Congress and lay the groundwork for an agenda that serves the American people.
 - H.R. 1 reaffirms Congress’ authority to regulate money in politics, pushing back against the Supreme Court’s *Citizens United* and *Buckley* decisions.
- **Strengthen Oversight of Campaign Finance Laws**
 - H.R. 1 ensures that there are cops on the campaign finance beat who will enforce the laws on the books.
 - H.R. 1 tightens rules on super PACs and restructures the Federal Election Commission to break the gridlock and enhance its enforcement mechanisms.
 - H.R. 1 repeals Mitch McConnell’s riders that prevent government agencies from requiring commonsense disclosure of political spending.

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE

FIGHTING BIG MONEY IN POLITICS

- It's been 10 years since SCOTUS handed down its terrible *Citizens United* decision. It's time to rescue our democracy. @HouseDemocrats passed #HR1 – the most ambitious set of democracy reforms in a generation. We will clean up Washington and return power to the people!
- *Citizens United* opened the floodgates of unaccountable money in our politics. Enough is enough. As our first order of business this Congress, @HouseDemocrats passed #HR1 – a bold reform package to fight big money #ForThePeople.
- Democrats are committed to fighting big money in politics and overturning *Citizens United*, because with special interests out of the way, and with a government that actually works #ForThePeople, we can deliver the change that people want to see.

We can: [INSERT ANY ISSUE, EXAMPLES BELOW]

- Raise wages and create millions of good-paying jobs.
- Lower prescription drug prices and reduce the cost of health care.
- Invest in infrastructure and fix our highways, roads, bridges and airports.
- Increase pathways to high-quality education.
- End LGBTQ discrimination and enact the Equality Act.
- Reform our nation's broken immigration system.
- Establish universal high-speed internet and protect #NetNeutrality.
- Protect the financial interests and well-being of American consumers.

SAMPLE CONSTITUENT SURVEY

FIGHTING BIG MONEY IN POLITICS



Dear Friend,

Ten years ago today, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its infamous *Citizens United* ruling, which allowed wealthy donors, well-connected special interests and large corporations to spend unlimited amounts of money in our politics.

As we mark this somber anniversary, I want to hear from you. Please fill out the below survey to share your views and join my email list.

* * *

**DO YOU THINK THERE'S TOO MUCH
BIG MONEY IN POLITICS?**

<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
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* * *

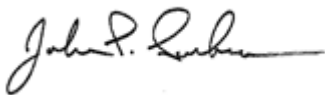
On March 8, 2019, House Democrats passed [H.R. 1, the For the People Act](#), a historic package of reforms that I co-sponsored to fight back against the deluge of big money in politics unleashed by *Citizens United*.

H.R. 1 will clean up corruption in Washington, expose secret money in our politics, crack down on lobbyists, strengthen election security, protect the right to vote and return power back to the American people with clean, citizen-owned elections. By leading with H.R. 1, House Democrats made a clear commitment to put the public's interests ahead of special interests and to restore trust, transparency and integrity in Washington.

Like hundreds of other bills passed by House Democrats and supported by a majority of Americans, H.R. 1 has been blocked in the Senate by Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Senate Republicans – at the behest of their wealthy donors and special-interest allies.

On the 10th anniversary of *Citizens United*, we must redouble our efforts to end Mitch McConnell's obstruction, fight big money in politics and return to government of, by and for the people.

Sincerely,



Congressman John P. Sarbanes
Maryland's Third Congressional District



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TOWN HALL IN A BOX

FIGHTING BIG MONEY IN POLITICS

AT A GLANCE

Holding a town hall marking the ten-year anniversary of the Supreme Court's misguided *Citizens United* decision offers you a strong opportunity to showcase your reform bona fides and to highlight your leadership on H.R. 1 – the most significant effort to clean up corruption in Washington since Watergate.

By hosting a frank and candid conversation with your constituents about the problems with money in politics, ethics in government and voting rights – and about the practical and powerful solutions that Democrats have put forward in H.R. 1 – you can burnish your credentials as a reformer and engage with your constituents on an issue of deep importance and resonance.

EVENT IDEAS

- Member roundtable with local environmental organizations to discuss why fixing our democracy will result in meaningful climate action.
- Outdoor rally with working families groups to rail against the corrosive influence of wealthy and well-connected corporations, and highlight how cleaning up Washington will deliver higher wages and better jobs for hardworking Americans.
- Roundtable discussion with local civil rights organizations about the importance of cleaning up our democracy and building a more just and equitable society.
- Citizen forum on Democrats' solution to fight big money in politics with a 21st-century campaign finance system that puts small donors at the center of our political system.

COALITION CONTACTS

Inviting local chapters of national grassroots and advocacy organizations is a great way to build key relationships, encourage a diverse array of perspectives and drive substantial turnout at your district event.

A large coalition has formed to advance H.R. 1's empowering reforms to strengthen our democracy and return political power back to the American people. These groups are well versed in the issues and would welcome the opportunity to help make your district event a success. To invite one of these organizations to participate in your event, or to think through potential event partners, please contact:

- **Public Citizen:** Aquene Freechild (afreechild@citizen.org)
- **Common Cause:** Izzy Bronstein (ibronstein@commoncause.org)
- **People for the American Way:** Rio Tazewell (rtazewell@pfaw.org)
- **Town Hall Project:** Nathan Williams (Nathanwilliams@townhallproject.com)
- **End Citizens United Action Fund:** Scott Fay (scott@endcitizensunited.org)
- **Congressman Sarbanes:** Raymond O'Mara (raymond.omara@mail.house.gov)

SELECT COALITION MEMBERS INCLUDE

NAACP	People for the American Way	End Citizens United
Indivisible	CWA	National Partnership
Brennan Center for Justice	Democracy Initiative	National LGBTQ Task Force
Leadership Conference	NARAL	Coalition to Stop Gun Violence
Democracy 21	MoveOn	Network
League of Women Voters	Friends of the Earth	Common Cause